

The City of
LOWELL
Alive. Unique. Inspiring.

Master Plan Public Opinion & Existing Conditions Data

March, 2012



General Overview

- Master Plan Overview & Planning Process
- Public Opinion & Data Collection Process
- Public Opinion General Trends & Highlights
- Survey Importance, Performance & Resource Trade-offs
- Visioning Session Themes
- Online Participatory Planning Tool Themes
- Existing Conditions Data Highlights
- Next Steps

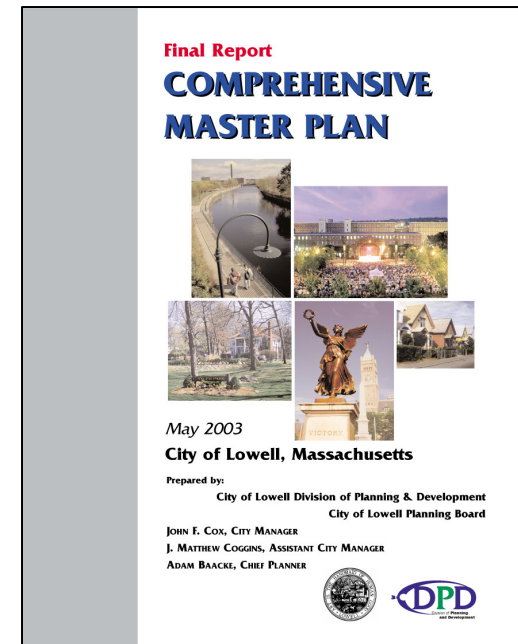


Master Plan Overview

- 20 year vision for the future
- Single chapter on sustainability

Public Opinion Research (2001-2002)

- Surveyed 1,000 residents
- Interviewed community leaders and business owners
- Held focus groups and forums

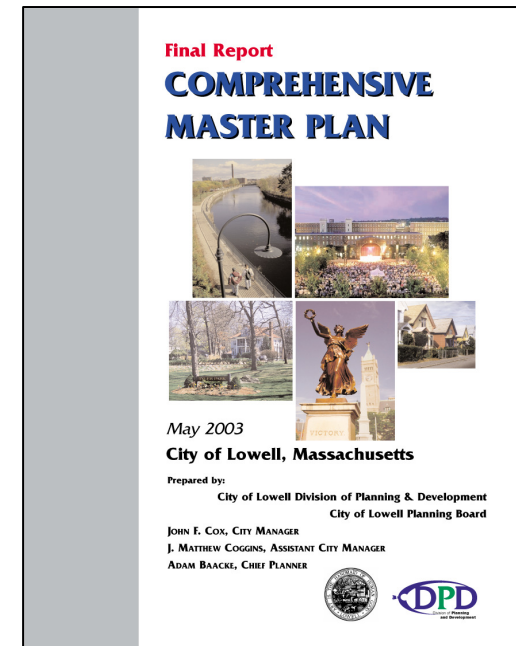


The City of **LOWELL** *Alive. Unique. Inspiring.*

Master Plan Overview

2003 Master Plan Goals

- Neighborhood Quality of Life
- A Lifetime of Housing Opportunities
- Unique Waterfront Environments
- A Vibrant and Diverse Downtown
- Institutional and Cultural Development
- Economic Growth
- Regional Retail
- Transportation
- Sustainability



The City of **LOWELL** *Alive. Unique. Inspiring.*

Master Plan Update/Sustainability Planning Process

- Bi-Weekly DPD Steering Committee Meetings
- 10 Interdepartmental City Staff Meetings
- Compilation of Data to Provide Snapshot of Lowell Today and Track Trends Over Time (Demographics, Housing, Transportation, etc)
- Public Participation Process (Survey, Visioning Sessions, Online Planning Tool)
- Draft Document
- Final Document

The City of Lowell
and the
Department of Planning and Development
invite you to

**SHARE YOUR VISION FOR
A SUSTAINABLE LOWELL**



Join us for a series of visioning sessions
and help shape the city's long-range plan for the future.

HOUSING and PUBLIC SERVICES	JULY 14
TRANSPORTATION and MOBILITY	JULY 19
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WORKFORCE INVESTMENT and INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS	JULY 25
COMMUNITY CHARACTER, ENGAGEMENT and IDENTITY	JULY 28
OPEN SPACE and NATURAL RESOURCES	AUGUST 3

All meetings will take place from 6:00 – 8:30 pm at the
Lowell Senior Center, 276 Broadway Street, Lowell

 Translation into Spanish, Khmer, and Portuguese will be provided upon request.
Please contact Allegra Williams at 978-446-7200 x1473
one week before each meeting to request this service.



Public Participation Process

- **SURVEY** 800 households completed a telephone survey conducted by Research America, INC in 4 languages. Data was analyzed by DPD.
- **VISIONING SESSIONS** 160 stakeholders attended 5 sessions facilitated by DPD. Translation and transportation were provided.
- **ONLINE PARTICIPATORY PLANNING TOOL**

175 participants, including 61 teens from 6 local youth organizations, shared over 1,000 comments through an online participatory planning tool launched for the first time in partnership with Emerson College.

The City of Lowell
and the
Department of Planning and Development
invite you to

**SHARE YOUR VISION FOR
A SUSTAINABLE LOWELL**



Join us for a series of visioning sessions
and help shape the city's long-range plan for the future.

HOUSING and PUBLIC SERVICES	JULY 14
TRANSPORTATION and MOBILITY	JULY 19
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WORKFORCE INVESTMENT and INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS	JULY 25
COMMUNITY CHARACTER, ENGAGEMENT and IDENTITY	JULY 28
OPEN SPACE and NATURAL RESOURCES	AUGUST 3

All meetings will take place from 6:00 – 8:30 pm at the
Lowell Senior Center, 276 Broadway Street, Lowell

Translation into Spanish, Khmer, and Portuguese will be provided upon request.
Please contact Allegra Williams at 978-446-7200 x1473
one week before each meeting to request this service.



Public Participation Process

Outreach Strategy

- 20 Public Presentations
- Email Newsletters to 2,000 Community Members
- Direct Invitation to 9 City Boards & Commissions
- Translated Flyers Posted in Downtown, Neighborhood Business Districts, & through 10 Institutions/Organizations
- Lowell Telecommunications Corporation Bulletin Posted in 4 Languages
- Facebook, Twitter & Local Blogs
- Radio Broadcasts
- Lowell Sun & Boston Globe Coverage



The City of **LOWELL** *Alive. Unique. Inspiring.*

The City of Lowell
and the
Department of Planning and Development
invite you to

**SHARE YOUR VISION FOR
A SUSTAINABLE LOWELL**



Join us for a series of visioning sessions
and help shape the city's long-range plan for the future.

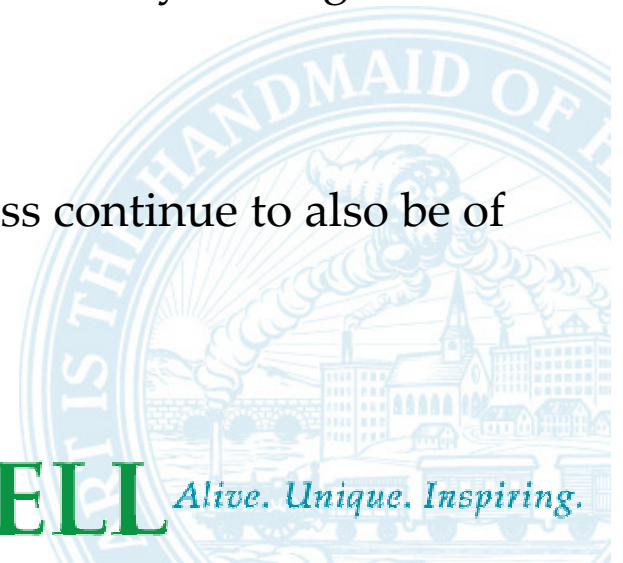
→ HOUSING and PUBLIC SERVICES	JULY 14
→ TRANSPORTATION and MOBILITY	JULY 19
→ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WORKFORCE INVESTMENT and INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS	JULY 25
→ COMMUNITY CHARACTER, ENGAGEMENT and IDENTITY	JULY 28
→ OPEN SPACE and NATURAL RESOURCES	AUGUST 3

All meetings will take place from 6:00 – 8:30 pm at the
Lowell Senior Center, 276 Broadway Street, Lowell

Translation into Spanish, Khmer, and Portuguese will be provided upon request.
Please contact Allegra Williams at 978-446-7200 x1473
one week before each meeting to request this service.

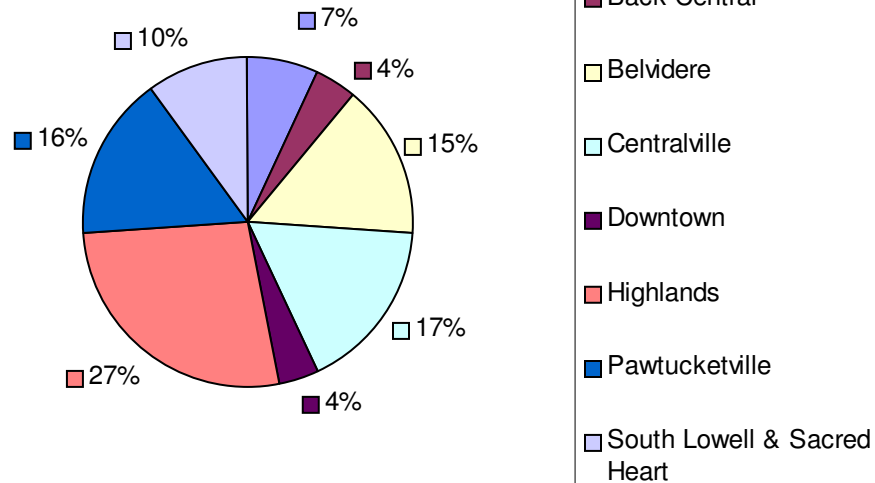
Public Opinion Trends

- Public Safety, Cost of Living, City Services, Neighborhood Character, Schools, and the Environment continue to be highly important
- Challenge of Maintaining Both City Services and Low Property Taxes
- Shift in Interest from Affordable Housing to Jobs
- Desired Support for a Vibrant Local Economy, Including More Diversity of Entertainment/Shopping Opportunities Downtown
- Some variation in City Performance Ratings by Age, Ethnicity & Neighborhood
- Bicycle, Bus & Pedestrian Improvements Requested
- Community Character & Pride and Information Access continue to also be of Importance

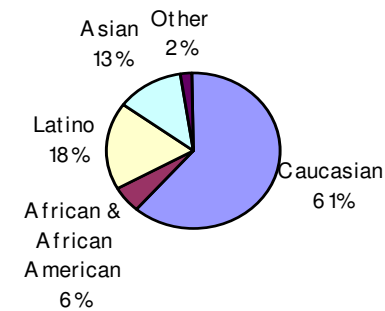


Survey Demographics

Participation By Neighborhood

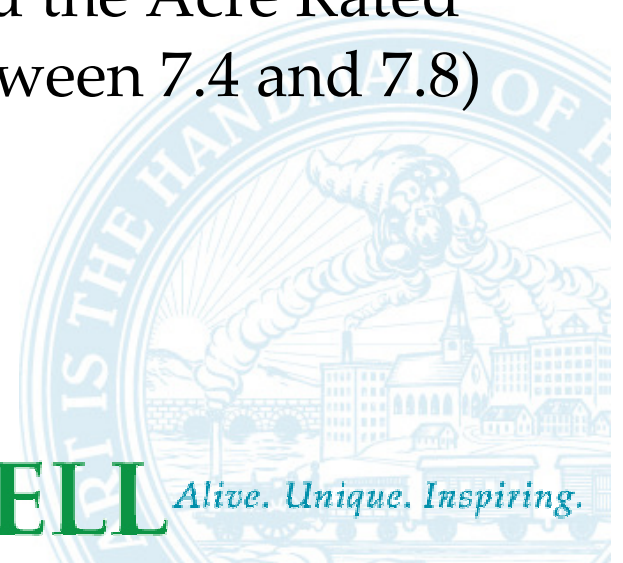


Participation By Ethnicity



Survey - Overall Satisfaction with Lowell

- 75% Rated Lowell a 7 or Higher Out of 10
- Latinos and Caucasians were Most Satisfied of All Ethnic Groups (7.6 and 7.5 out of 10, Respectively)
- As Age Increased, so did Overall Rating of the City. Those Under Age 30 Rated it 6.7, and those Over Age 70 Rated it 8.1.
- Belvidere, the Highlands, Centralville, and the Acre Rated Lowell Highest of all Neighborhoods (between 7.4 and 7.8)



Survey - Importance Category Rankings

At Least 70% of Participants Agreed that the Following were Most Important when Choosing a Community in 2011

Top Items of Importance in 2002

1. **Public Safety**
2. **Schools**
3. **Neighborhood Character**
4. **Cost of Living**
5. **Environmental Quality**
6. **City Services**

Top Items of Importance in 2011

1. **Public Safety**
2. **Cost of Living**
3. **Neighborhood Character**
4. **City Services**
5. **Schools**
6. **Environmental Quality**



Survey - Performance Category Rankings

65% Ranked the Following Items a 7.5 or higher out of 10 in 2011

Highest Performance in 2002

1. A city that preserves its historic places
2. Good trash removal
3. Plenty of public events and festivals
4. Plenty of cultural activities
5. Good recycling program

Highest Performance in 2011

1. A city that preserves its historic places
2. Good trash removal
3. Plenty of public events and festivals
4. Good recycling program
5. Plenty of cultural activities



Survey - Performance Category Rankings

The Following were Ranked as 7.5 or Higher out of 10
by just 1/3 of Participants in 2011

Least Favorable Performance Ranking in 2002

1. Lots of job opportunities for me in the city
2. A good variety of stores downtown
3. Reasonable property taxes
4. Enough parking
5. A good selection of housing that I can afford
6. Traffic that moves freely through town
7. Well-maintained roads and sidewalks
8. Downtown restaurants and cafes open later in the evening

Least Favorable Performance Ranking in 2011

1. Lots of job opportunities for me in the city
2. Traffic that moves freely through town
3. Well-maintained roads and sidewalks
4. Neighborhood stores that meet my needs
5. Streets and walkways designed to keep accidents from happening
6. Reasonable property taxes
7. *Convenient pathways for pedestrians/bikes
8. *Incentives for energy efficiency

*Not included in 2002 survey instrument



The City of **LOWELL** *Alive. Unique. Inspiring.*

Survey - Performance Category Highlights

- **Public Safety** ratings improved with the age of residents (over age 70 at 7.8). Africans, African Americans (6.9), and Asians (6.8) rated it least favorably. Those earning over \$100,000, rated it worst of all income levels (6.6).
- **Recycling and Trash** were rated an 8, 9 or 10 by at least 2/3 of respondents. **Recycling** was rated least favorably by Downtown residents (5.9).
- **Equity of Public Services** was rated best by Belvidere (7.5), the Acre (6.9), and the Highlands (6.8), and least favorably by the Sacred Heart and South Lowell (5.5).
- **Accessing Information** through the Lowell Sun was most common (52%), followed by word of mouth (18%), TV (12%), the city website (10%), and radio (3%).
- **Schools** were rated an 8, 9 or 10 by over 50% of participants and were ranked better by those with children in attendance (6.9) than those without (5.8).
- **Job Opportunities** were rated a 5 out of 10 on average.
- **Bike and Pedestrian Infrastructure** were rated similarly across ages, ethnicities, and income levels (6 out of 10 on average).
- **Parks & Recreation Areas** were rated least favorably by those under 30 years of age (5.9) and by those living in Back Central and the Acre (both 6.7).
- **Opportunities for Civic Engagement** was rated most highly by Caucasians (6.9) and older residents. Those over age 70 rated it a 7.6, where as those under age 30 rated it a 6.1.



Survey - Resource Trade-offs

City Service Improvements vs. Property Taxes	% 2011	% 2002
Increasing city services, but increasing taxes to do so	16	35
Maintaining current city services, while controlling tax increases	80	60



Survey - Resource Trade-offs

Transportation & Mobility	% 2011	% 2002
Making it easier for cars to move through the city	42	19
Making it easier and safer for bicycles and pedestrians to share streets and protect quiet neighborhoods	54	77



Survey - Resource Trade-offs

Housing Options vs. Open Space	% 2011	% 2002
Increasing housing options by building more housing, but with more people in each neighborhood	33	48
Encouraging more open space in neighborhoods, but reduce housing options	63	44



Survey - Resource Trade-offs

Neighborhood vs. Downtown	% 2011	% 2002
Make Lowell look more attractive by improving the downtown and city gateways	43	36
Make your neighborhood look more attractive by improving residential areas	55	60



Survey - Resource Trade-offs

Recreation Improvements	% 2011	% 2002
Add more swing sets and play equipment in parks for younger children	26	35
Add more athletic fields in parks such as basketball and volleyball courts	31	35
Add more open space for trails, natural areas, and conservation land	40	26



Survey - Resource Trade-offs

Neighborhood Character vs. Property Rights	% 2011	% 2002
Protect historic design and neighborhood character by regulating design and construction	56	63
Enhance private property rights by allowing an individual property owner to do what they want with their property	41	31



Survey - Resource Trade-offs

Economic Development vs. Neighborhood Character	% 2011	% 2002
Encourage job creation by bringing industrial and commercial development to more areas of the city	54	50
Protect residential areas by restricting industrial and commercial development in most areas of the city	43	46



Survey - Resource Trade-offs

Local vs. Big Businesses	% 2011	% 2002
Help small, locally owned businesses to grow in Lowell	67	-
Attract familiar national companies to the city	29	-



Survey - Resource Trade-offs

Environmental Considerations	% 2011	% 2002
Pursue policies that protect the environment for long-term benefit even when there is an added short-term cost	81	-
Prioritize policies based on short-term cost even if they are not good for the environment and may not work in the long-term	14	-



Visioning Sessions

Housing

- Maintain a Diversity of Housing Options
- Increase % of Family Housing
- Maintain Affordability
- Encourage Owner-Occupancy
- Protect Historic Character
- Continue to Enforce Building Codes & Maintain Housing Quality
- Assist Home-Owners with Maintenance through Loan Programs Promote Opportunities for Energy Efficiency
- Educate about Green Building Practices & Fair Housing Rights
- Change Public Safety Perceptions, as High Auto Insurance is a Deterrent to Living in the City



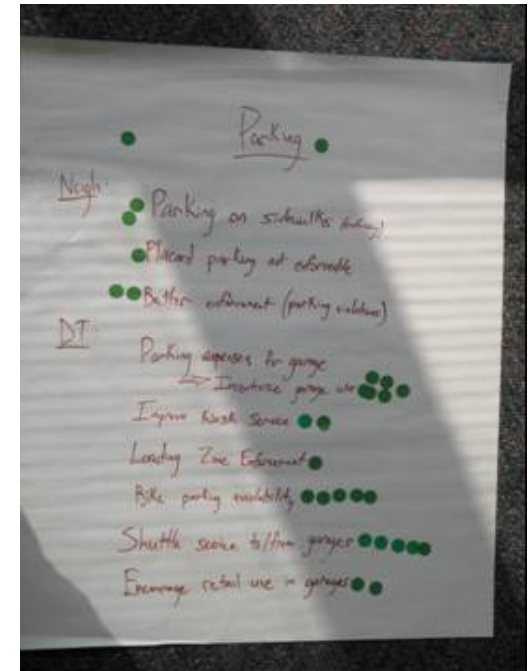
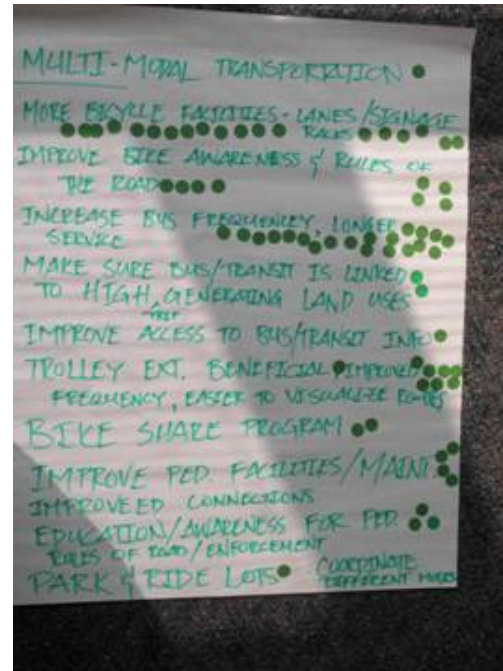
Public Services

- Increase Public Safety Efforts
- Expand Recycling Initiatives
- Address Illegal Dumping & Trash Collection Concerns
- Improve Snow Removal
- Provide Translation Services

Visioning Sessions

Transportation & Mobility

- Make the City More Bike/Pedestrian Friendly (bike lanes, trees, lighting, benches, crosswalks, handicapped access)
- Extend Hours of Bus Service & Provide Shelters & Schedules
- Traffic Calming on Major Routes
- Expand Trolley System
- Introduce Opportunities for Park & Ride
- Transform the Connector into a Boulevard



Visioning Sessions



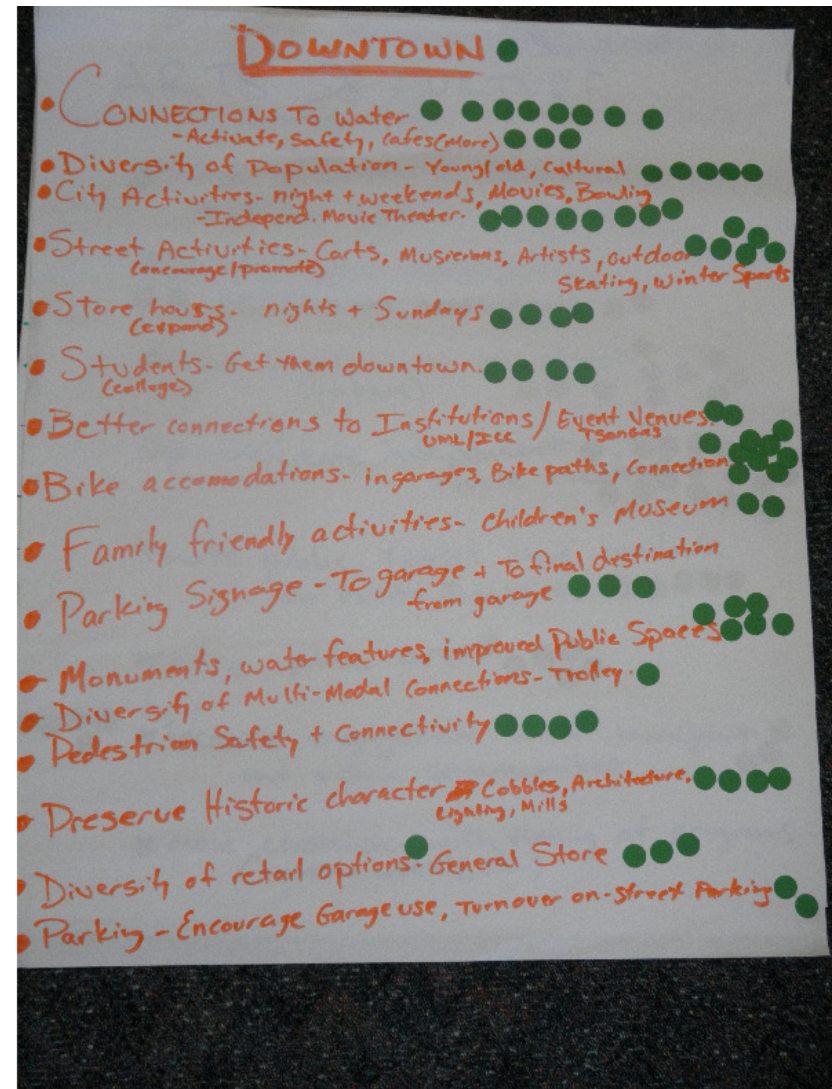
Open Space & Natural Resources

- Address Flooding/Storm Water Concerns
- Plant More Trees (Native Species)
- Adapt Public Spaces for Different Cultural Needs/Abilities/Ages
- Diversity Programming in Parks
- Expand Regional Networks of Trails
- Improve Maintenance/Cleanliness of Parks and Waterways
- Activate Waterfronts with Arts & Recreational Programming
- Increase Sustainability Education/Outreach/Promotion

Visioning Sessions

Economic Development & Institutional Partnerships

- Diversify Job & Shopping Opportunities
- Improve the Appearance of & Support Local/Family Businesses
- Promote Lowell as a College Town
- Retain Young, Talented Students & Artists
- Encourage Institutions to Share Space & Other Resources
- Refurbish Older Institutions for New Uses
- Solicit Increased Engagement of Business Community & Provide Incentives to Developers
- Increase Access to Training & Opportunities for Entrepreneurs
- Create More Parking Options & Utilize Empty Parking Lot Space Creatively



Visioning Sessions

Community Character, Engagement & Identity

- Invest More Resources in Neighborhoods
- Increase Engagement of Younger Residents & Ethnic Communities
- Establish Programming that Builds Community Pride & Fosters Social Interaction
- Improve Outreach/Marketing Through Technology & Other Means



Participatory Planning Tool: Community Planit

Arts, Culture & Entertainment

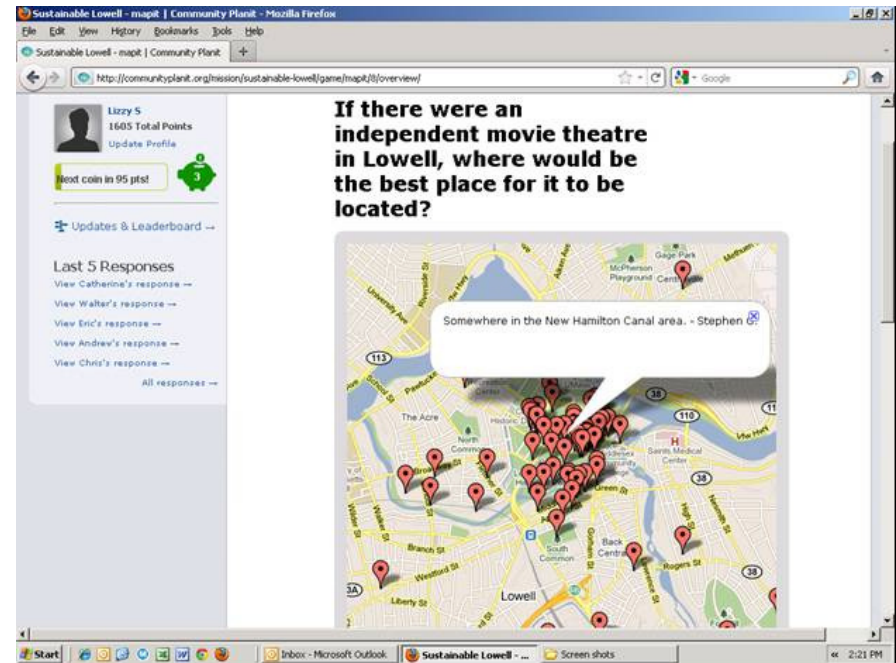
- Downtown Movie Theatre, Independent Bookstore, Retail Clothing Options
- Incubators & Cooperatively Used Spaces
- Neighborhood Arts Programming, Community Education, Young Artist Support & Artist-in-Residence Programs

Communication & Engagement

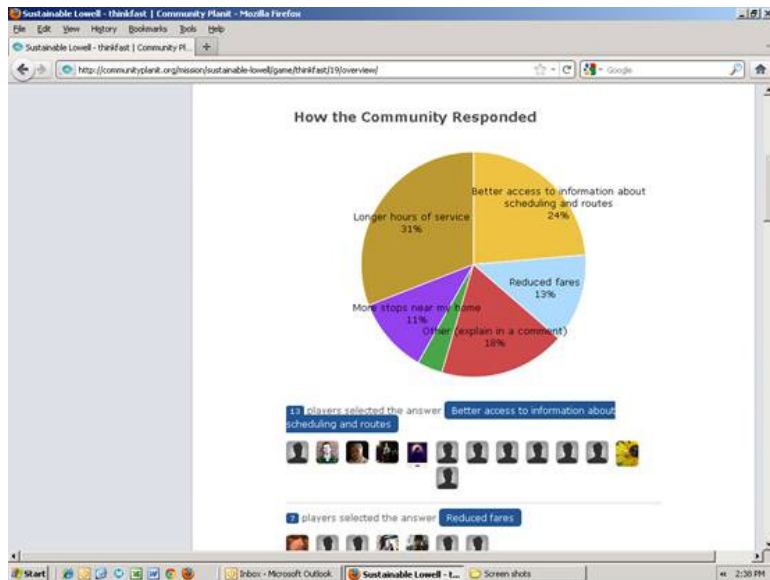
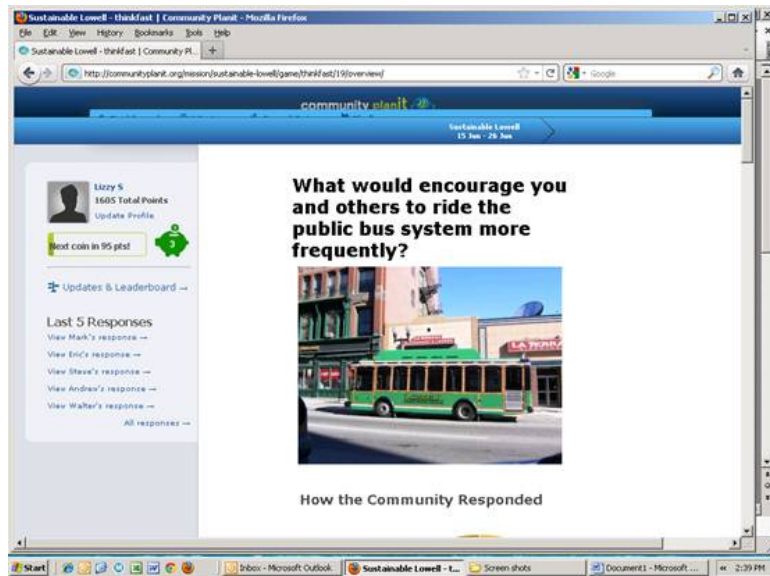
- Public Wifi in Parks, Downtown, & in Low-Income Neighborhoods
- Disseminate Information through Social Media & Other Sources

Housing

- 42% Would Like More Family Housing



Participatory Planning Tool: Community Planit



Transportation & Mobility

- Bike Lanes/Amenities Downtown & by UMass Lowell
- 50% would Utilize a Bike-share Program
- 31% would Use Bus System if Hours were Extended, 24% if Schedules were Accessible
- Lord Overpass/Limited Access to Gallagher Terminal was Significant Pedestrian Barrier

Parks & Recreation

- Community Gardens (22%), Pedestrian/Bike Paths (22%), Basketball Courts (36%) & Swimming Pools/Water Elements (15%)

Environmental Considerations

- Expand Recycling Options, Encourage Energy Efficiency & Enhance Education/Outreach

Existing Conditions: Demographics

Highlights

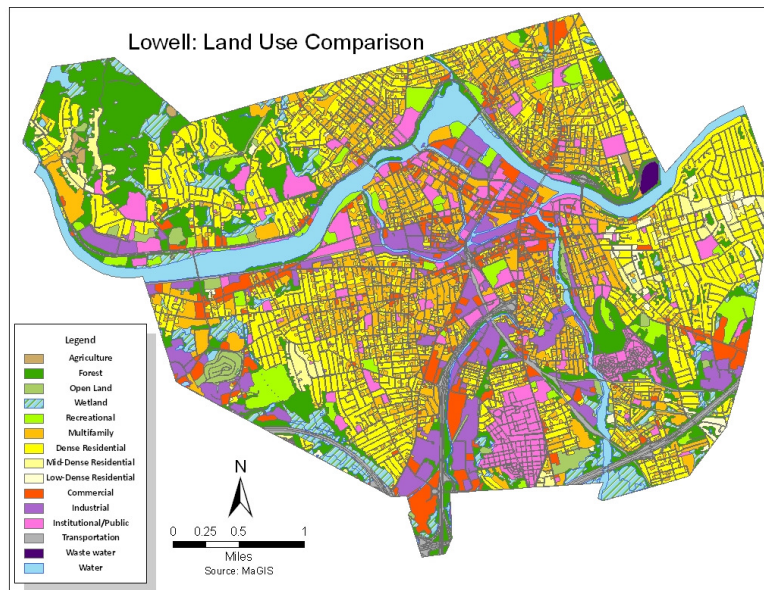
- **Ethnicity** - Minority Population Grew from 24% in 1990 to 47% in 2010
- **Age** - Population of 50-69 Year-Olds Grew from 14% in 1990 to 19% in 2010, but Lowell's population remains younger than the state average
- **Downtown Growth** – Downtown population grew by 35.7% accounting for all of the City's population growth over the decade, while many neighborhoods lost population.



Existing Conditions: Land-Use

Highlights

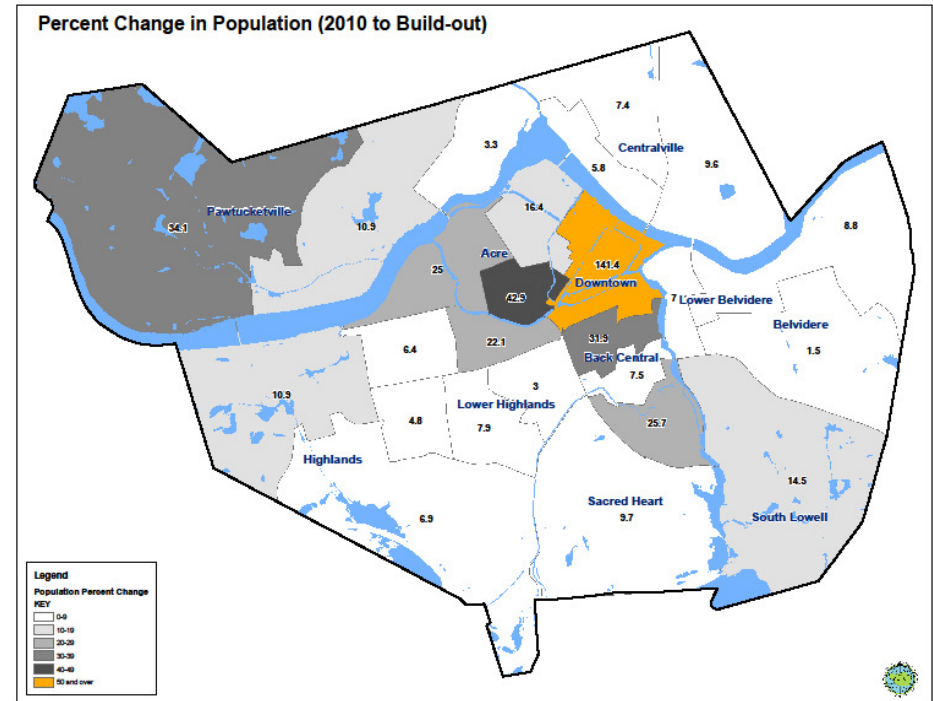
- Greater % of Lowell is Developed for Housing than Peer Communities (48% in Lowell vs. 41% on Average)
- Zoning Code Revision (2004)
- 9 Historic Review Districts Created to Protect Neighborhood Character (2005 & 2011)
- Downtown Lowell Smart Growth Overlay District (2008)
- Reorganization of Development Services to Streamline Development Process, Enforcement & Planning (2010)



Existing Conditions: Build-out Analysis

Highlights

- 5,715 Potential Dwelling Units & 12,364 Additional Residents Projected
- Reduction in Projected ANR, Subdivision & Vacant Land Lots
- Increase Projected Lots in DMU & JAM Urban Renewal District
- Additional Redevelopment Options through Zoning Code Section 8.1 (Churches, Schools, Mills, & Fire Stations)
- Most Significant Growth Potential in Downtown, Pawtucketville, & the Acre



Existing Conditions: Transportation



Highlights

- 73% Commuted to Work Alone (2000) vs. 79% (2010)
- \$22 Million Early Parking Garage – 900 Spaces and 17,500 Sq Ft Commercial Space Covered by Parking Dept. Revenue (2009)
- Parking Kiosk System Downtown
- Public Electric Vehicle Charging Station Installed
- 12% Downtown Parking Surplus (2010) vs. 6% deficit (2007) due to better balancing of day/night demand cycles and garage management
- Increased Traffic Volume to Capacity Downtown and near UMass Campuses due to growth
- 40% of Roads Need Structural Improvements & Base Rehabilitation



The City of **LOWELL** *Alive. Unique. Inspiring.*

Existing Conditions: Economic Development

Highlights

- Economic Downturn: 10.8% Unemployed (2010) vs. 3.1% (2000)
- Employment in Lowell remains at pre-recession levels; job losses have been predominantly in the suburbs
- Shift from Manufacturing to Healthcare, Technology & Education Industries (LGH & UMass Lowell are Top Employers)
- UML Investments as Economic Driver
- Vacancy rates are high due to the recession but generally lower than surrounding towns
- Surplus in sales of Food/Drink & Motor Vehicles; Leakage in Purchasing of Electronics & Clothing/Shoes

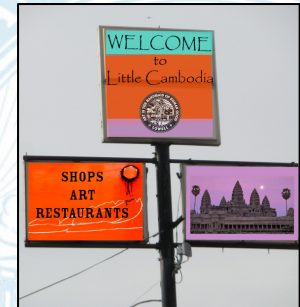


The City of **LOWELL** *Alive. Unique. Inspiring.*

Existing Conditions: Arts, History & Culture

Highlights

- 3 Million Tourists Visit Annually
- Appleton Mills & Western Avenue Lofts
- 400 Artist studios and live/work studios
- 209 Festivals, 23 Museums/Galleries, & 14 Performance Spaces/Theatres
- Creative Economy Plan:
On the Cultural Road
- Partnerships with UML and MCC (Arts & Ideas, Riverfest, etc)
- Cambodia Town
- MCC Downtown Cultural District Designation
- 27 Properties Listed on National Register of Historic Places
- Designated a *Preserve America* Community



The City of **LOWELL** *Alive. Unique. Inspiring.*

Existing Conditions: Housing

Highlights

- Housing Boom & Foreclosure Crisis
- Median Home Sale Prices changed from \$140,000 in 2000 to \$274,000 (2005) to \$185,000 (2009)
- Need for Housing Stock Upgrades/Energy Efficiency Assistance with 50% of Lowell's Housing Built Before 1940
- Lowell is one of only 51 Communities that have Met the State's Goal of 10% Affordability Under Chapter 40B (Appx. 13% are Affordable)
- Dramatic Increase in Market Rate Housing Downtown (78.8% affordable in 2000 to 52.2% affordable in 2011, with no displacement)
- UMass Lowell Student Population Increased 20% (from 2007-2010) With Approximately 2/3 Currently Living in Lowell



The City of **LOWELL** *Alive. Unique. Inspiring.*

Existing Conditions: Recreation & Open Space



Highlights

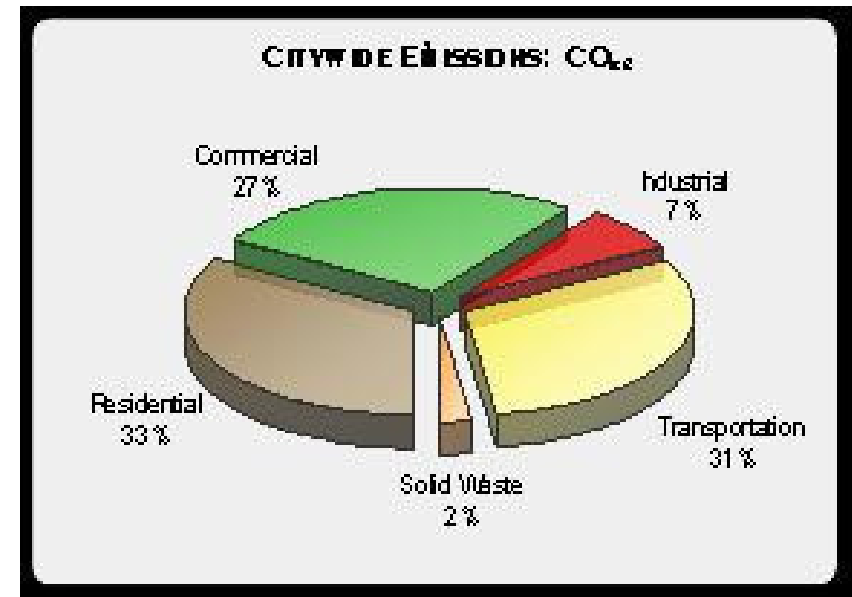
- 13.3 Acres of Total Public Open Space Developed Since 2001
- 10 New Public Parks Established Since 2001 (ie: Olga Nieves, Jollene Dubner & Muldoon)
- Improvements to Parks & Squares (ie: Clemente, McPherson, Shedd)
- Shift from Tennis Courts to Skate Parks & Volleyball Courts
- 6,662 Linear Feet of Canal Walkway Restored/Constructed Since 2001; 11,360 Currently Underway
- Concord River Greenway (Total of 2,700 Linear Feet and 1.3 Acres of Open Space)



Existing Conditions: Greenhouse Gas Inventory

Highlights

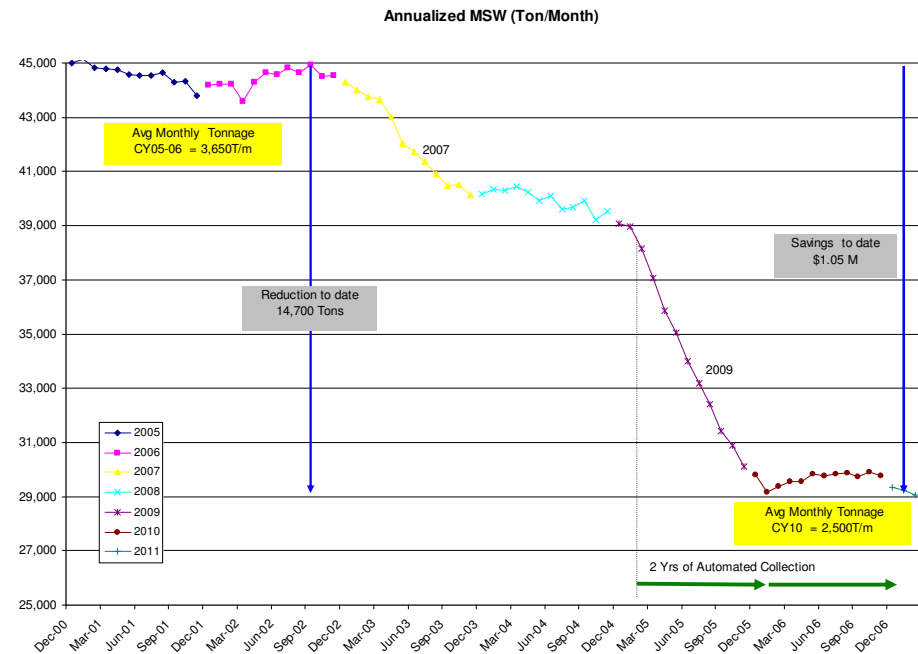
- 1 Million Tons of CO₂ Emissions in 2008
- Residential Buildings are Greatest Contributor of GHG Emissions (33%)
- Transportation is Second Greatest Contributor (31%)
- Municipal Emissions Accounted for 3.6% of Total Citywide



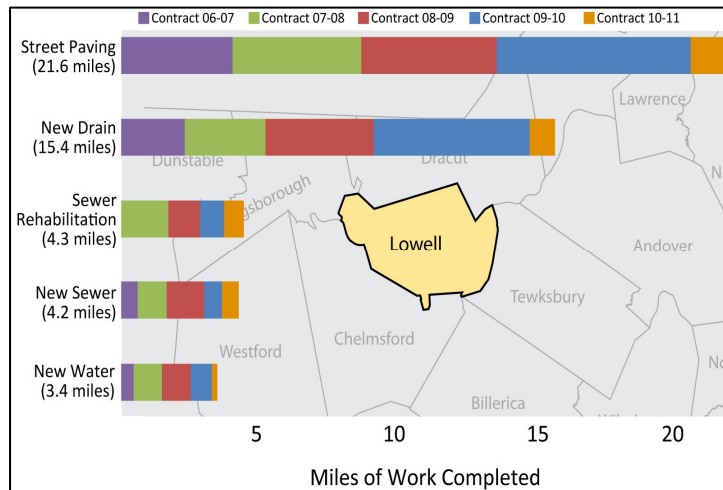
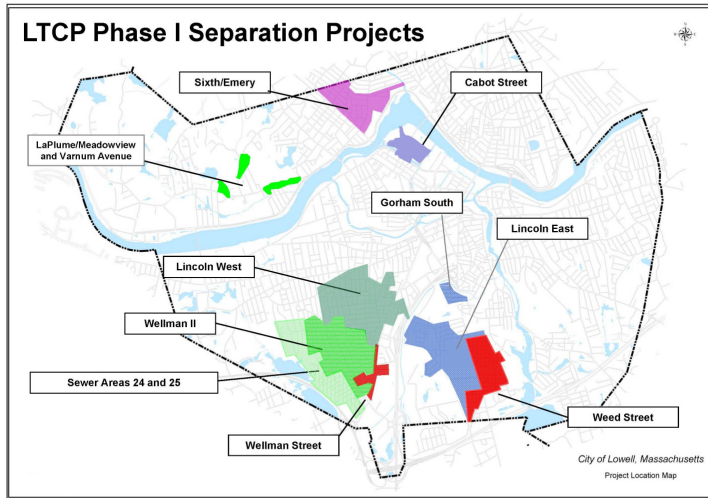
Existing Conditions: Solid Waste & Recycling

Highlights

- (2002-06) Lowell Averaged 45,000 Tons of Trash Annually
- (2007-08) Reduced to 40,000 Tons through Education & Outreach
- (2009-Present) Reduced to 30,000 Tons as a Result of Bin System for Collection
- Recycling has Increased Proportionally



Existing Conditions: Water & Wastewater



Highlights

- Merrimack River is Safe for Swimming & Drinking (Class B)
- 50% of Lowell's Sewers Combine Stormwater & Sewage
- 50% of Sewer System is Over 100 Years Old
- Over \$90 Million Spent on Improvements to Regional Wastewater Utility and Sewer Separation Projects Since 2001
- Energy Management Systems Reduce Energy Consumption by Over 33% (Green Roofs, PV & Heat Retention)

Next Steps

- Public Presentation of Draft Plan – Spring 2012
- Final Plan – Summer/Fall 2012
- Plan Implementation

